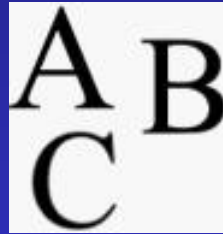


Considering Students' Literacy: Educating the 21st Century Student/Worker



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What does it mean to be literate?

- Students and teachers have clear ideas about what being literate means.
- Most of their understanding comes from standards prescribed by schools and states.



What “struggling” students say...

- “You gotta read books...that’s what you gotta do to be literate. You gotta read a lot.” – 20-year-old woman
- “You have to do what they tell you to do in class. They always say work hard on the workbook and you’ll get it.” – 22-year-old man
- “I think you have to just practice a lot. I practice writing what I see in magazines. I just keep writing.” – 18 year-old-woman

What reading teachers say...

- “We know that students are literate...when they’re really making gains in literacy when their TABE[®] scores improve. It’s a helpful tool.” – Advanced Reading Teacher Region II Job Corps
- “You become literate when you can open a book or a manual or whatever you want and get the information you need for yourself. That’s our goal for the students.” – English I Teacher Region II Job Corps
- “I know my kids are getting it when they don’t need as much help with their TABE[®] worksheets. When they’re on a role, I know they’re gaining in literacy.” –English II Teacher Region II Job Corps

What the research says...



- Being literate includes more than the ability to decode print on a page.
- Being literate involves many aspects of one's whole person (cognition, social situation, culture, experience, beliefs, activities, objectives, etc.)

What the research says...

- Literacy evolves over time.
- Literacy is always happening. It is *not* static or rote.
- Literacy usually happens cooperatively and always in contexts.



What does it mean to be *fully* literate?

- A fully literate person is one who is adept at critical reading, writing, speaking and listening.



How does Job Corps support students' literacy?

Stance

- Implicitly relies on standards and methods prescribed by schools and states
- Exclusively relies on standardized assessments of literacy skills
- Generally uses traditional texts and individualized instruction in classrooms

Glitch

- JC students were *failed* by standards and methods prescribed by schools and states
- JC students require *authentic* assessments of literacy skills, practices *and* understanding
- Adolescents and adults today use *multiple* kinds of texts and are motivated by *diverse* instructional practices

What is the disconnect?



- Academic and technical training for the 21st century student/worker should include instruction that heightens the way literacy is acquired, used and developed in the *real* world and in *real* time.

Fully Literate Individuals: Educating the 21st Century Student/Worker



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What does it mean to be *fully* literate?

- A *fully* literate person is one who is adept at critical reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- A *fully* literate person integrates knowledge of literacy skills (cognitive scaffolding) and literacy practices (social and cultural ways of knowing).



Job Corps Policies

- “Centers shall provide instruction in...reading competencies.” (PRH 3.8 Reading)
- “Centers shall use formal testing procedures to evaluate the overall progress and mastery level a student has achieved in each content area...using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE[®]).” (PRH 3.6 R 4)
- “Centers shall...develop flexible, individualized training schedules tailored to the student’s individualized learning needs.” (PRH 3.2 Administration and Management of Career Development Services)

Competencies

Initial skills

Letters of the alphabet

Compound words, irregular verbs, forming plurals

Forming possessive nouns, prefixes and suffixes, accent marks, etc.

Interpret graphic information

Signs, indexes, graphs, maps, forms, etc.

Words in context

Same meaning, opposite meaning, appropriate meaning, etc.

Recall information

Details, sequence, stated concepts, etc.

Construct meaning

Main idea, cause/effect, compare/contrast, conclusion, etc.

The Unintended Consequences of JC Policies...

- Adversely affects...instruction and teachers' ideas about literacy
- ...classrooms and organization
- ...selection of texts
- ...understanding of assessments
- ...implicit understanding of what it means to be a *fully* literate worker/citizen

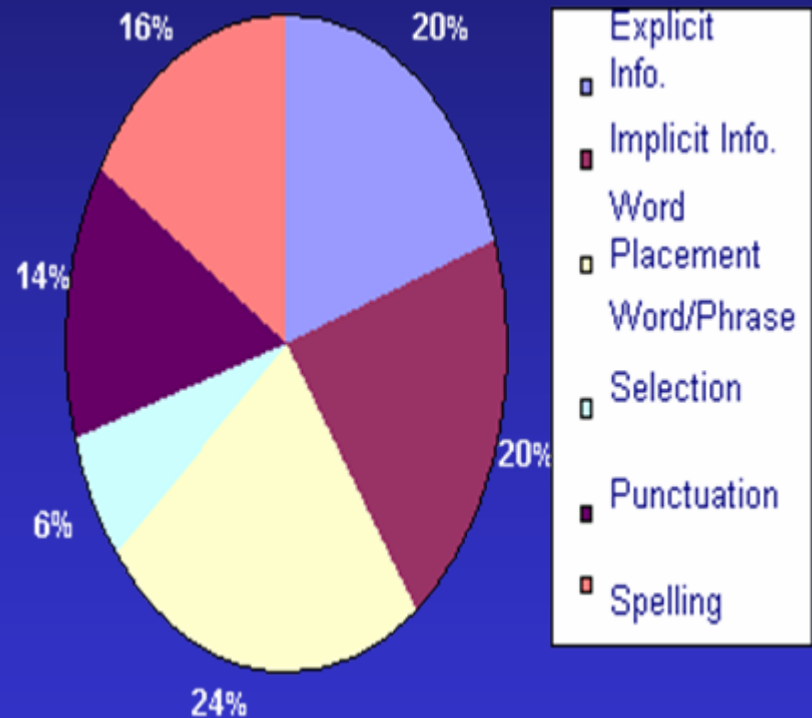
Indicators of a *fully* literate individual...



- Effectively use and share information found in various kinds of texts.
- Engage and develop different kinds of texts.
- Demonstrate understanding in multiple ways for themselves and their community.

What TABE[®] *actually* tests...

- 70% of the test measures students' ability to discern implicit and explicit information from texts.
- Only 30% of the test measures students' knowledge of reading competencies.



What does this mean?

- Job Corps' Reading and English teachers currently spend too much time on reading competencies.
- These competencies should be contextualized in literacy work (comprised of literacy skills *and* literacy practices).
- There is a need for professional training that clarifies how students function as *fully* literate individuals and ways to support and assess their development.
- There are multiple missed opportunities to instruct students on the connection between literacy and job readiness in Reading and English classrooms.

Recommendations



- Revise the Content Requirements in Reading to Reflect and Emphasis on the Development of Literacy.
- Revise the TABE[®] Reading Diagnostic to Better Reflect the Content of the Test.

Recommendations

- Restructure Classrooms to Promote the Development of *full* Literacy.
- Encourage Cooperative Teacher Networks in Job Corps centers.



Literacy References

See:

- McIver, A. & Staples, J.M. (2006). *Thinking about what works: Literacy and numeracy instruction in Region II Job Corps Centers*. Mid-Year Report of Two Year Evaluation. Math Foundations, LLC & Literacy for Life, LLC.